United Nations A/58/398

General Assembly

Distr.: General
1 October 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Agenda item 121
Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

Comprehensive review of the post structure of the United Nations Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly decision 57/574, in which the Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive review of the post structure of the United Nations Secretariat (A/57/483) and requested the Secretary-General to include, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, more information on the question of post structure, and in particular to provide a comparison of the post structure of the Secretariat with other multilateral organizations not covered in the report.

The information included in the present report covers the comparison of the post structure of the United Nations Secretariat with organizations of the United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies. Analysis of that information confirms the findings reported in document A/57/483. No anomalies were noted that could be characterized as top-heaviness of the Secretariat structure vis-à-vis comparative post structures throughout the organizations of the United Nations common system.

* This report is submitted late due to the need to finalize the review and analysis of comparative data compiled for the United Nations common system organizations.

03-53897 (E) 101003

I. Introduction

1. The report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive review of the post structure of the United Nations Secretariat (A/57/483) was submitted to the General Assembly in response to its resolutions 54/249 and 56/253. By its decision 57/574, the General Assembly took note of the report and decided to continue consideration of the question during its fifty-eighth session. It also requested the Secretary-General to include, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, more information on the question of post structure, and in particular to provide a comparison of the post structure of the Secretariat with other multilateral organizations not covered in the report, as well as with those of some Member States, and the percentage share of each grade.

2. Pursuant to General Assembly decision 57/574, paragraphs 65 to 69 of the introduction to the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005 respond to the request of the General Assembly to address the question of post structure in the context of the proposed budget for the next biennium. The present report provides additional information on the comparison of the post structure of the Secretariat with the other organizations within the United Nations common system. In addition to the present report, the question of post structure of the United Nations Secretariat is also covered in documents A/57/483, as well as document A/53/955, which report on developments in the post structure of the Secretariat over the 10-year period from the 1988-1989 biennium to the 1998-1999 biennium.

II. Scope and constraints

3. The comparative review of the post structure of the United Nations Secretariat with other multilateral organizations is subject to a number of critical constraints. In particular, it should be noted that the validity of comparisons of post structure with other organizations is dependent on establishing accurate grade equivalencies, which in itself is a complex and sometimes controversial process. Further, even if the equivalencies between grade levels can be accurately established, organizations are different in size, structure and span of control, due to their functions and management philosophy or culture. The experience of the recent review has revealed that some organizations, particularly those outside the United Nations common system, and some Governments consider data on grade structure to be sensitive and tend to be reluctant to share such information.

4. Pursuant to General Assembly decision 57/574, the present report compares the post structure of the United Nations Secretariat with other organizations of the United Nations common system on the basis of the annual personnel statistics compiled by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). In addition to the United Nations Secretariat, those statistics cover 25 United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies. Further broadening of the scope of the comparative analysis beyond those 25 common system organizations could only be effected at a cost of a significant weakening of the validity of the conclusions which could be drawn. Summary results of external analysis with the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Commission were incorporated in an earlier report on the subject (see A/57/483).

III. Comparative analysis

5. The table below provides summary comparative information on the percentage share of each grade, in the Professional category, for the Secretariat, the funds and programmes, and the specialized agencies as at 31 December 2001. The data is based on the CEB annual statistical tables covering staff of the organizations in the United Nations common system with appointments for a period of one year or more.

Grade distribution as a percentage of total Professional staff as at 31 December 2001

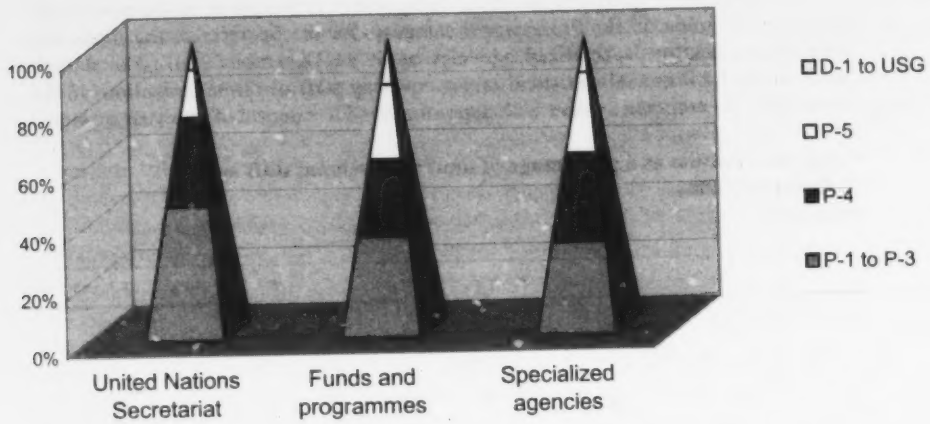
(Percentage)

	P-1/P-2	*P-3*	*P-4*	*P-5*	*D-1*	*D-2*	*ASG/USG*
Total United Nations Secretariat	15	30	30	16	6	2	1
Total funds/programmes[a]	15	19	26	25	10	4	1
Total specialized agencies[b]	11	20	30	27	8	3	1
Overall United Nations common system	**14**	**23**	**29**	**22**	**8**	**3**	**1**

[a] UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNITAR, ITC, UNU, WFP, UNAIDS.
[b] ILO, ICAT, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, PAHO, ICAO, UPU, ITU, WMO, IMO, WIPO, IFAD, UNIDO, IAEA.

6. The comparative information summarized above reflects the relatively lower percentage shares of staff at higher grade levels as compared to other organizations in the United Nations common system. The data shows that staff at the ASG/USG level are approximately 1 per cent of total Professional staff across the Secretariat, the funds and programmes and the specialized agencies. However, staff at the D-2 and D-1 levels in the Secretariat represent lower percentage shares of total staff as compared to organizations within the funds and programmes and the specialized agencies. Within the Secretariat, staff at the D-2 level and D-1 level comprise 2 and 6 per cent, respectively, of total staff, as compared to 4 and 10 per cent for the funds and programmes, and 3 and 8 per cent for the specialized agencies. Similarly, at the P-5 level, Secretariat staff comprise 16 per cent of total staff, as compared to 25 per cent for the funds and programmes and 27 per cent for the specialized agencies. Conversely, at lower grade levels (P-2, P-3, P-4), Secretariat staff comprise higher percentage shares as compared to staff at those levels in other organizations within the United Nations common system. Overall pyramid groupings for the P-1 to P-3, P-4, P-5 and D-1 to USG levels are presented graphically below.

Percentage share of total Professional staff



7. The comparative information above does not suggest the existence of a top-heavy post structure within the United Nations Secretariat relative to the funds and programmes or to the specialized agencies. This information supports the generally positive external analysis previously carried out and reported in document A/57/483.

8. With regard to internal analysis of the Secretariat post structure, further information is provided in the introduction to the proposed programme budget (paras. 65 to 69), separately addressing trends across grade levels for the last few bienniums. The proposed grade distribution for the biennium 2004-2005 is also reflected and compared to grade distribution for the 2002-2003, 2000-2001 and 1998-1999 bienniums. The analysis presented in the introduction indicates that the grade distribution of posts in the Professional and higher categories, particularly in the upper echelon, has remained stable since the 1998-1999 biennium.

IV. Recommendation

9. **The comparative review does not reflect any anomalies that could be characterized as top-heaviness of the Secretariat structure vis-à-vis comparative post structures throughout the organizations of the United Nations common system. The level-by-level analysis of the comparative information compiled supports and further reinforces the findings reported in document A/57/483. It is recommended that the General Assembly take note of the present report.**